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ACCESSION NBR:96 FACIL:STN-50-52 AUTH.NAME KIRSCH,D. KRAMER,J. RECIP.NAME	04050030 DOC.DATE: 96/04/05 NOTARIZED: NO 9 Palo Verde Nuclear Station, Unit 2, Arizona Publi AUTHOR AFFILIATION Region 4 (Post 820201) Region 4 (Post 820201) RECIPIENT AFFILIATION	DOCKET # 05000529

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C SUBJECT: PNO-IV-96-016B:on 960324-25, licensee experienced difficulty in removing fuel assemblies located in southeast quadrant of A core.Licensee installed two straps on opposite sides of assembly which hook into lower end fitting. Т

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## PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-IV-96-016B

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information is as initially received without verification or evaluation, and is basically all that is known by Region IV staff in Arlington, Texas on this date.

Facility<br/>Arizona Public Service Co.Licensee Emergency Classification<br/>Notification of Unusual Event<br/>Alert<br/>Site Area Emergency<br/>General Emergency<br/>X Not Applicable

## Subject: DAMAGED FUEL ASSEMBLY FOUND DURING CORE DEFUELING

March 24-25, 1996, with Palo Verde Unit 2 in a refueling outage, the licensee experienced difficulty in removing fuel assemblies located in the southeast quadrant of the core. As noted in the original preliminary notification (PNO-IV-96-016, dated March 28, 1996), all assemblies except A07 were successfully removed. The licensee determined that Assembly A07 was lower than expected by approximately 0.7 inches and was damaged at the bottom with approximately seven fuel rods protruding from the bottom. The purpose of this update is to describe actions completed since the PN was last updated (PNO-IV-96-016A, dated April 1, 1996) and to provide licensee planned actions to remove Assembly A07.

To provide additional structural support, the licensee installed two straps on opposite sides of the assembly which hook into the lower end fitting and connect to a licensee designed upper plate. During installation of the straps, the assembly slipped down approximately 1 inch from where it had been raised during previous lifting attempts. Video examination of the lower part of the assembly did not indicate any new damage, and the fuel rods protruding from the bottom of the lower assembly did not appear to move in relation to the bottom plate. Radiological monitoring indicated that no fuel damage had occurred.

The licensee concluded that they could not use the normal refueling crane to lift the assembly with the external supports and submitted an emergency Technical Specification change to obtain one-time NRC approval of their proposed lifting arrangement, which was to use an alternate rigging and hoist arrangement from the refueling bridge. The alternate lifting arrangement is necessary to ensure proper grappling and safe transport of the structurally weakened fuel assembly.

On April 3, 1996, the staff approved a one-time emergency Technical Specification change which allows use of the licensee's proposed alternate lifting arrangement for Assembly A07.

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The licensee performed mockup and load testing of the alternate lifting arrangement, including lifting and transport operations in the core of a dummy assembly, which was of similar weight.

The licensee observed additional damage to the fuel assembly support plate and is manufacturing an alternate lifting plate to augment the grapple attachment. Additionally, the licensee installed two rods into two of the guide tubes to increase the axial stability of the fuel assembly.

The licensee plans to use an electrical discharge machine to cut part of two of the four support legs on the lower end fitting to provide stress relief prior to attempting to lift the assembly. The licensee has performed underwater mockup testing of the cutting procedure.

Once the assembly is lifted free from any interferences, a special lower end plate will be installed to capture any fuel pins which might slip through the existing damaged lower end fitting. The licensee will monitor all operations with video equipment and will suspend operations if any fuel rod slippage is observed.

A cognizant reactor safety branch chief has taken over on-site oversight of the NRC inspection followup activities. The inspectors will observe and followup on the licensee's planned actions.

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The state of Arizona has been informed.

There continues to be considerable media interest from local newspapers and television stations. The licensee provided a tour for interested media representatives through the Unit 2 containment. An NRC press release was issued on April 3, 1996, announcing that the staff had approved the emergency Technical Specification change.

Region IV has notified NRR, OEDO, and PAO. Region IV has a special inspection underway to follow up on the event.

The information herein has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 1 p.m. (PST) on April 4, 1996.

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